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ABSTRACT

Before adoption of the Student Accountability Standards on April 1, 1999, the North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction were working with low-performing schools to improve student achievement, both in mandated and voluntary assistance. Many K-8 schools have made exemplary progress in helping all students reach proficiency levels. This document is intended to share strategies that have been used successfully with underachieving students. The document also contains strategies, identified by high school educators, for helping high school students and for adapting improvement suggestions from the elementary school to the high school levels. The document contains information on the K-12 Accountability Standards and the improvement process. Recommended implementation checklists are included for the superintendent and central office, principal and school staff, teachers, and developers of personalized education plans. A section on K-8 strategies lists some strategies for improving reading, writing, and mathematics proficiency. A section on 9-12 information identifies some current strategies, explores issues related to the accountability standards, and makes some suggestions for improving high school personalized education plans (PEPs). Sample PEP forms are included, as are sample action steps for reading, writing, and mathematics. Two programs are discussed in more detail, the High School Advocacy Program and the Early Entrance to High School program. Some frequently asked questions are also presented. "Closing the Achievement Gap," the final section contains excerpts from an address by the state superintendent and a "blueprint" for school system and school improvement. (SLD)

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Implementing the Student Accountability Standards

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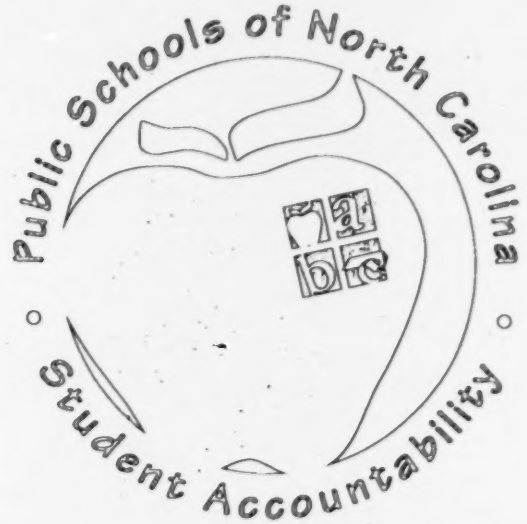

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Public Schools of North Carolina • State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction
Instructional and Accountability Services • Division of School Improvement

June 2000

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Implementing the Student Accountability Standards

Phase II

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Division of School Improvement

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Introduction

Prior to adoption of the Student Accountability Standards on April 1, 1999, the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction were working with low-performing schools to improve student achievement, both in mandated and voluntary assistance. With help from teachers, parents, principals, local boards of education, the State Assistance Teams, and staff from the Division of School Improvement, many K-8 schools have made exemplary progress in helping all students reach proficiency levels in both reading and mathematics. This document is intended to share strategies that have been used successfully with underachieving children.

However, issues related to high schools also needed to be addressed. In December, 1999, the Division of School Improvement asked a group of approximately 30 high school educators to meet with Department staff to identify issues and strategies related to implementation of the Student Accountability Standards at the high school level. Realizing the uniqueness of high schools, many implementation processes may have to be adjusted to fit the organizational structure of secondary schools.

During that meeting, the educators first identified strategies that are currently being used successfully to meet the academic needs of students performing at Levels I and II. Secondly, they identified a number of issues/barriers to implementation of the Standards, but also focused on strategies to overcome many of these barriers. Their information is included in this document as a guide for other high schools to use when implementing the standards.

This meeting was intended to be the first of several the Department of Public Instruction/Division of School Improvement will hold to look at high school issues and make suggestions on how to improve the educational program for secondary students. We wish to thank the following people for their contributions to the meeting and this document and for their willingness to continue working with the Department on issues related to improving high school education.

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K-12 Information on the Student Accountability Standards and the PEP Process

Recommended Implementation Checklist for Superintendent/Central Office

Internal Understanding

- Ensure that all central office staff and principals have a copy of the Student Accountability Standards policy and opportunities to discuss implications and requirements for implementation.
- Review and use, as appropriate, the contents of the *Student Accountability Standards Resource Notebook.*
- Appoint a Student Accountability Standards contact person for the LEA.

Informing the Community

- Develop a communications plan for the LEA that includes strategies for sharing information about the policy with school staffs, students, parents, and community members. The SAS contact person or public information officer, with the support of central office staff and principals, should develop the plan.
- Use a variety of communication vehicles such as newsletters, radio, public meetings, public service announcements, newspapers, presentations to service organizations, brochures distributed to community agencies, parent focus groups, and web pages to share information about the SAS.

Planning for Implementation

- Analyze and align current LEA policies dealing with student academic performance and promotion with the new Student Accountability Standards.
- Develop an implementation plan that includes the components listed below and others appropriate to the LEA. Assign specific tasks, persons responsible, timelines and evaluation procedures.
- Establish review committee(s):
  - establish criteria for grade level work,

- develop operating procedures for the review committee(s), and
- train the committee members.

- Develop the Personalized Education Plan (PEP) format and process.

- Develop guidelines and assessment for determining "adequate progress" in 5th and 8th grade writing (process and content).

- Plan systemwide training on diagnosing individual student needs and aligning strategies to match the needs.

- Ensure that all teachers deliver a variety of instructional strategies and techniques effectively.

- Identify, develop, and disseminate a catalog of interventions that is available systemwide.

- Develop a budget for the use of Student Accountability Standards funds.

- Plan and implement other activities/tasks as needed.

- Provide disaggregated data to schools.

- Monitor all SAS implementation activities on a regular basis.

Recommended Implementation Checklist for Principal/School Staff

Internal Understanding

- Ensure that all school staff have a copy of the Student Accountability Standards policy and opportunities to discuss implications and requirements for implementation.
- Review and use, as appropriate, the contents of the *Student Accountability Standards Resource Notebook.*
- Appoint a Student Accountability Standards (SAS) contact person for the school.

Informing the Community

- Develop a communication plan for the school that includes strategies for sharing information about the policy with students, parents, and school community. The principal and School Improvement Team should take the lead in this effort.
- Use a variety of communication vehicles such as newsletters, student assemblies, PTA meetings, grade-level parent meetings, parent focus groups, and web pages to share information about the SAS.

Planning for Implementation

- Analyze and align instructional program and priorities with the new SAS.
- Include implementation strategies for SAS in the School Improvement Plan. Assign specific tasks, persons responsible, timelines, and evaluation procedures.
- Align staff development that supports implementation of the SAS. Topics may include, but are not limited to, curriculum alignment, data analysis, diagnosing students' needs, and focused intervention strategies.
- Train all staff members in the LEA's procedures for implementing the
  - review process,

- grade-level proficiency criteria,
- guidelines for determining adequate progress in 5th and 8th grade writing, and
- Personalized Education Plan (PEP) format and process.

- Review systemwide catalog of interventions. Add school-based intervention strategies and disseminate to school staff.

- Monitor all grade-level and classroom implementation activities on a regular basis.

Recommended Implementation Checklist for Teachers

Personal Understanding

- Review a copy of the SAS policy and become familiar with implications and requirements for implementation.
- Review and use, as appropriate, the contents of the *Student Accountability Standards Resource Notebook.*
- Participate in all training and school activities related to the SAS policy.

Informing Students and Parents

- Communicate the SAS policy to students and parents on a regular basis, both formally and informally.

Planning for Implementation

- Align daily lesson plans, unit plans, and pacing guides with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study.*
- Implement strategies designated in the School Improvement Plan.
- Participate in staff development activities to support implementation of the SAS such as curriculum alignment, data analysis, diagnosing student needs, and focused intervention strategies.
- Participate in training sessions on the LEA's procedures for implementing the
  - review process,
  - grade-level proficiency criteria,
  - guidelines for determining adequate progress in 5th and 8th grade writing, and
  - the Personalized Education Plan format and process.
- Assess and monitor students' progress daily and make adjustments in instructional delivery as necessary.

Recommended Process for Developing Personalized Education Plans (PEPs)

Principals are responsible for coordinating and overseeing the PEP process in their schools.

- Require grade level/content area teachers or other selected personnel to identify students who failed to meet the Student Accountability Standards (scoring at Level I or II) and require a PEP. Schools are encouraged to develop a PEP for any student who is academically at risk.

- Establish a process to gather and organize the information specified on the PEP form.

- Examine the information and thoroughly analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each student identified as needing a PEP.

- Arrange needs in priority order, if several are identified. Keep in mind that the needs may not always be academic. There may be other barriers contributing to a lack of academic performance.

- Assemble the appropriate personnel (teacher, counselor, social worker, parent/guardian, principal, and/or assistant principal, etc.) based on each student's needs to review the data and develop a PEP. These persons, along with the parent/guardian, make up the PEP team and are responsible for reviewing the data and developing the PEP. All parties sign off on the completed PEP.

- Outline the individual responsibilities of each PEP team member, including the parent or guardian, in developing, implementing and monitoring the PEP.

- Assess each student's progress on a regular basis. If strategies placed in the plan are not producing the desired results at the first check point or any subsequent check point, the PEP team should meet to discuss needed revisions.

- Monitor PEP implementation on a regular basis. Keep the PEP where it is accessible to the PEP team members. Hold periodic update sessions with parents or guardians.

- Include all documentation in the student's permanent file when the intervention period is complete.
- Develop procedures for transmission of information and files within the school or to the next school.

K-8 Information

K-8 Strategies for Improving Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Proficiency

There is no single resource or strategy that should be used to improve student performance. Rather, schools may use a variety of appropriate ones to meet the particular needs of their students. It is important that resources are aligned with the curriculum and instruction and that research-based and promising best practices are followed.

The following compilation of strategies and resources completed by State Assistance Teams and the Division of School Improvement is offered to help improve teaching and maximize learning in the classroom.

Reading and Writing

- Focus on the keys to motivation: success and usefulness. Students must be successful and must see the usefulness in what they are doing. They need to know when, why, and how they will use the skills, strategies, or information taught.

- Help students in developing more effective decoding skills which will facilitate their independent reading and comprehension.

- Read to students every day from a novel. Discuss the novel and do springboard activities as often as possible.

- Teach book and print awareness concepts and phonemic awareness to develop alphabetic principles for use in reading and writing.

- Teach phonics and structural analysis to enable students to decode words when reading text i. e., letter-sound associations, knowledge of syllables, prefixes, suffixes, root words).

- Teach comprehension strategies such as summarizing the main idea, predicting events and outcome of upcoming text, making inferences, discussing author's intent and word choice, monitoring for coherence and understanding.

- Use RUNNERS, a procedure to "unpack" text. This entails

  1. reading the title and predicting;
  2. reading the questions and answer choices;
  3. numbering each paragraph;

4. reading each paragraph and circling important information;
5. rereading questions and beside each question, putting the number of the paragraph where the answer can be found;
6. eliminating answer choices; and
7. making a final choice.

- Align basal reading series, literature trade books, and other classroom resources to *North Carolina Standard Course of Study* goals, objectives, and competencies.

- Align daily and weekly lesson plans with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.

- Involve local education agency's central office and school-level staff in on-going development of curricular and instructional plans for a school.

- Monitor, update, and support a school's curricular and instructional plans.

- Implement a balanced reading program including read aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, content-area reading, discussion, and writing.

- Schedule 120-180 minutes daily for the literacy program.

- Provide daily direct instruction on each student's instructional reading level.

- Provide daily opportunities for independent reading for everyone (grades K-2, 10-20 minutes; grades 3-5, 25-35 minutes). Include volunteers, teachers, teaching assistants, and the principal. Accept no excuses! Provide a variety of genres from which students can select. Include fiction and non-fiction.

- Provide literary, informational, and practical texts in each classroom to include a wide range of literature and content-area materials.

- Encourage teachers to model their own reading, writing, and thinking processes.

- Model and scaffold higher order thinking strategies and skills.

- Teach comprehension strategies and skills using a variety of texts across the disciplines (i. e., use prior knowledge and experiences,

identify main idea and details, summarize, make inferences, make connections, use metacognitive strategies, etc.).

- Incorporate reading, writing, and discussion in all content areas.

- Assist students in developing a repertoire of questions for students to ask themselves, to ask the author, and to ask about the text content before, during, and after reading.

- Offer tutoring before school and on week-ends, if possible. Set up Reading Buddy clubs in which upper grade students read to and with students in lower grades. Use students who have scored Level II on the Reading End-of-Grade tests. Provide name tags for upper-grade Reading Buddies. Teach buddies some simple before, during, and after reading questions. Reward Reading Buddies with a pizza party at the end of the year.

- Provide opportunities for students to read 25 or more books per year appropriate to their independent reading level.

- Provide a variety of texts: decodable texts for practice and reinforcement of letter-sound associations; content-area texts for interest, content knowledge, vocabulary expansion; chapter books for practice and growth in reading competence; leveled texts to promote self-selection and reading competence; literature on a variety of topics at different levels from different genres such as poems, recipes, charts, schedules, and "how to" pieces.

- Relate reading and writing to everyday life situations.

- Expect each student to read at home daily (grades K-2, 10-20 minutes; grades 3-5, 20-40 minutes) with assistance or independently.

- Use various types of ongoing assessment to plan and monitor instruction.

- Use K-2 Summative Assessments and EOG Test results to plan appropriate instruction for Achievement Levels I, II, III, and IV to ensure progress for all students.

- Use Department of Public Instruction resources and other resources to guide instructional planning and monitor students' achievement levels in reading and writing.

- Teach test-taking strategies.

- Plan and conduct Family Literacy Nights for students, parents, teachers, and administrators.

- Teach and monitor the writing processes.

- Demonstrate and guide students in a variety of strategies writers use to:

  - Decide on topics,
  - narrow focus,
  - organize ideas,
  - get started,
  - revise for content,
  - edit for error reduction, and
  - publish works.

- Use three highlighters to identify the beginning (green), middle (blue), and end (red) of students' writing papers.

- Score writing papers using a rubric.

- Hold conferences with students concerning their writing papers.

- Make transparencies of writing papers that have scored 3 or 4 (from the state scoring guides). Have students underline the beginning, middle, and end, details, events, characters, setting, etc., so they can see proper models.

- Teach several graphic organizers as a means of helping students plan and structure their writing. Require evidence that they are using the graphic organizers. Periodically model for students by doing "think alouds" as you write a paper on a transparency.

- Plan instruction that provides daily opportunities for meaningful and purposeful writing for a variety of audiences.

- Teach conventionally correct spelling, grammar, and mechanics through focused instruction and practice.

- Conduct student-teacher conferences to identify writing strengths and areas for needed improvement.

- Use good literature as a model for helping students improve their own writing.
- Guide students in working selected pieces from planning to publication using various writing processes.
- Allow students opportunities to collaborate and write in small groups.
- Share and display student writing.
- Promote an understanding of focused holistic scoring for writing papers.
- Train volunteers and school support staff in writing processes and criteria so they can serve as writing coaches to fourth, seventh, and tenth graders.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop writing proficiency (e.g., writing camps, writing olympics, writing contests, bookmaking, anthologies, school publications, etc.).

Mathematics

- Align all textbooks and other instructional materials to the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*.
- Use Department of Public Instruction's publications *Strategies for Instruction in Mathematics,* mathematics testlets, *Mathematics Linking Series*, and *Math Superstars III* as primary resources for instruction. When using testlets, have students show their work for each problem and justify their answers. Have them use calculators whenever they are working from a testlet.
- Incorporate the use of manipulatives into daily instruction.
- Make calculators easily accessible and encourage students to use them when appropriate; however, students should master and be able to apply math skills independently.
- Teach problem-solving in all strands of the mathematics curriculum.
- Schedule 90 minutes of mathematics instruction daily.

- Use mathematics pacing guide to ensure adequate time for teaching all objectives.
- Administer quarterly benchmark assessments to evaluate mathematics program and guide planning for reteaching objectives not mastered.
- Target students scoring at Achievement Levels I and II on the NC End-of-Grade Mathematics Test, and provide additional instruction during, before, and/or after school.
- Challenge and accelerate students scoring at Achievement Levels III and IV.
- Incorporate End-of-Grade Test vocabulary and test format into daily instruction.
- Incorporate the use of computers into the mathematics program.
- Provide for ongoing review.
- Expect students to talk about mathematics and work in cooperative groups to solve problems.
- Use the overhead projector to demonstrate and model mathematics.
- Make learning mathematics fun and non-threatening by using games and interactive activities.
- Encourage students to generate and explain alternative ways to solve problems.
- Plan and conduct Math Family Fun Night for students, parents, teachers, and administrators to participate in math games and activities.
- Ask questions that require students to justify and explain their thinking.
- Relate mathematics to everyday problems and applications.
- Incorporate writing into mathematics instruction.
- Place strong instructional emphasis on application of mathematics concepts.

- Teach problem-solving strategies (i.e. use logical reasoning, make a table or an organized list, guess and check, look for a pattern, make it simpler).
- Practice mental mathematics and various estimation strategies.
- Use various types of ongoing assessment.
- Make assessment an integral part of teaching.
- Display student work reflecting *the North Carolina Mathematics Standard Course of Study* goals and objectives in classrooms and halls.
- Integrate mathematics into other subject areas and the real world.
- Provide students with open-ended problems to solve.

9-12 Information

Strategies Currently Being Used to Meet the Needs of High School Students Performing at Levels I and II

Use Effective Instructional Strategies in All Classes and Subjects

- Use alternative learning strategies and settings for students who are not successful in the traditional classroom.
- Provide a reading/mathematics specialist to team with regular classroom teachers and teach lessons twice each week.
- Pull out limited English students for content-specific assistance.
- Give a diagnostic pretest for each required course.
- Use the CCC lab, Light Span, and Accelerated Reader.
- Implement a schoolwide reading program.
- Assist teachers in being able to understand, design, and implement instructional strategies such as quality questioning, aligning curriculum and assessment, using benchmarks, Writing to Learn, etc., that guide students to move from low- to high-performing. Require all teachers to teach reading.
- Assist teachers in developing skills in differentiating instruction.
- Use limited "quick fix" approaches such as after-school assistance, in-school restarts, schools within a school (academies that "hold" students until prepared for course work), and summer school after eighth grade.
- Provide opportunities for academic enhancement.
- Use technology to enhance instruction.
- Teach reading, writing, and mathematics throughout the curriculum.
- Implement close articulation for curriculum and programming with the feeder middle school(s).

- Disaggregate and analyze data. Use data to inform instruction. Examine scale scores as well as grade-level proficiencies.

- Use portfolios for students in grades K-8.

- Require composition as the a semester course on the block schedule prior to having English II during second semester.

- Integrate testing into all courses by using test vocabulary and question stems.

- Provide interdisciplinary teaching.

- Provide a modified, shortened schedule for those students who may need it.

- Phase in mandatory End-of-Course (EOC) score requirements for promotion/passing courses.

- Require tutoring/remediation for all students performing at Levels I and II in EOC tested areas.

- Implement the "Integration Accommodation Program (IAP)." That is, consider combining two EOC courses to be taught for 2 semesters in a block schedule. For example, teach Biology and Algebra I as an integrated course. English III and U. S. History could be taught as an integrated course. Allow common planning time for teachers involved so they can develop thematic units and plan collaboratively.

- Implement the Success Program. (Use a "zero period" from 7:00 a.m.-8:00 a.m. to provide regular course instruction for some students. Provide flex time for teachers who work in the zero period.

- Require all teachers to include a mathematics and/or English objective in the weekly lesson plan.

- Provide all teachers with sample EOC tests to familiarize themselves with format and content.

- Implement "Teacher Smart" where the strongest, master teachers are assigned to provide the greatest help to lower-performing students.

Provide Additional Time for Students Scoring at Levels I and II

- Offer tutoring programs before, during, and after school.
- Stretch out the five required courses to year-long courses (on the 4x4 block).
- Establish classes that are prerequisites to entry-level course to serve students who fail the competency test.
- Require students who fail the competency test (eighth grade End-of-Grade test) to take a mini-course for one quarter during the 4x4 block using remedial software to repeat the eighth grade curriculum. Pair this with study skills.
- Offer an intensive reading lab as a pull-out program.
- Assign an accelerated student as a buddy for an at-risk student. Use teachers as mentors for students. Each teacher might have up to three students to mentor.
- Provide Saturday classes.
- Develop activity packets for students who need additional practice.
- Offer two-week intensive study cycles as needed during the summer. For example, mathematics, reading, computer skills, and LEP classes may be offered for a two-week period. Instruction is provided for nine days, and students are tested on the tenth day. Provide small classes (a maximum of 12 students), provide food, and call parents to recruit students.
- Provide special study sessions during the school day prior to testing.
- Provide peer tutors. Use students from nearby community colleges and universities, if available.
- Reteach during lunch periods for one hour. Devote one day per week to each subject area. Have labs open for students to use. Hold club meetings, sponsor intramural games and activities, hold student conferences during this time, and offer additional academic assistance.

Serve Exceptional Children Through an Inclusion Program

- Establish partnerships between the exceptional children's teachers and content-specific teachers.
- Use inclusion to abandon pull-out resource classes for exceptional children. Select regular education teachers carefully to pair with an exceptional children's teacher.
- Allow time for the exceptional children's teacher to facilitate the work of exceptional children in regular, content-specific classrooms.

Provide Opportunities for Teacher Teamwork and Collaboration

- Participate in collaborative planning with other grade level and subject area teachers from the same grade level.
- Participate in collaborative planning with teachers from grade levels above and below the current teaching assignment.

Provide High-Quality, Ongoing Professional Development

- Provide follow-up and on-site coaching to assist teachers in implementing the practices in the classroom. Provide an EOC accountability component.
- Assist teachers in understanding the EOC tests and how they are different.
- Provide professional development for teachers to improve skills in teaching reading, writing, and mathematics and in tutoring and conferencing.

Motivate Students and Provide Incentives for Accomplishment

- Implement the "No Tolerance Incentive Program." (Students with no absences, disciplinary referrals, or failure on tests for one week are allowed to leave at noon on Fridays. The school provides enrichment activities for students without transportation.)
- Use positive reinforcement.

- Help students participate in enhancement week-ends at community colleges and universities such as those sponsored by the Math and Science Education Network (MSEN).

- Develop motivational programs through business partnerships.

Maintain a Positive School Climate that Includes Parent Involvement

- Maintain positive, "can do" attitudes.

- Believe that "all students can learn" and clearly communicate high expectations. Explain test scores and performance to students.

- Foster parent involvement through frequent communication and the use of compacts and contracts.

- Develop and implement a freshman transition program.

- Conduct a conference with each ninth grade student and his/her parent/guardian to develop a four-year plan, etc.

- Use the Student Services Management Team (SSMT) for screening students and to recommend assistance for struggling students.

Issues Related to the Student Accountability Standards

The high school committee identified a number of key issues/barriers that impact on implementation of the Student Accountability Standards. These are listed individually with corresponding sample strategies for overcoming the barriers.

Barriers: Teacher Issues

Teachers may lack

1. support and materials,
2. knowledge of varied instructional strategies,
3. appropriate attitudes to work with students scoring at Levels I and II,
4. high expectations of students,
5. skill in differentiating instruction,
6. opportunities for teaming,
7. opportunities high quality professional development based on needs and impact on classroom performance,
8. ownership for student achievement,
9. skill in curriculum alignment,
10. knowledge of End-of-Course tests, and
11. adequate planning time.

Sample Strategies: Additional Planning Time for Teachers

- Arrange the master schedule to allow for common planning time.
- Schedule whole-subject planning one time each week, even if it occurs after school.
- Train facilitators on how to run meetings effectively (minutes/documentation, effective delegation, accountability for actions, etc.).
- Provide integrated planning by holding grade-level planning sessions during planning periods. Include "specials" such as ESL, EC, media, etc. in planning sessions.
- Provide for vertical alignment across grade levels.

Sample Strategies: High Quality Professional Development

- Schedule job-embedded staff development.
- Hold teachers accountable for professional development by giving assignments to be completed outside of the scheduled time.
- Provide follow-up to all professional development activities.
- Recognize teacher motivation.
- Sponsor motivational speakers.
- Allow teachers to be risk-takers with skills learned in professional development.
- Train teachers and administrators in Total Quality Education or other approaches to teaming.

Barrier: Strong Leadership

Sample Strategies: Strong Leadership

- Assist administrators with better understanding of assessment.
- Reinforce the importance of curriculum with principals at meetings held by central office staff.
- Change administrator training offered by universities to include additional emphasis and instruction in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.
- Monitor principal performance frequently (by central office staff).
- Prepare administrators to assess effectively the professional development needs of teachers.
- Train administrators in effective communication and require them to demonstrate their skills.
- Align evaluation of administrators with suggested improvements.
- Value administrators for creativity, vision, problem-solving, and team-building.

- Tie salaries to school/administrator performance.

- Require administrators to provide evidence of effective formative teacher evaluations. Look for use of higher order questioning, and alignment with the *North Carolina Standard Course of Study*. Use informal observations and provide frequent feedback. Include peer observations and observations by central office staff.

Barrier: Lack of Student Motivation and Poor Attitudes Towards Learning

Sample Strategies: Lack of Student Motivation and Poor Attitudes

- Start a "Student of the Week/Month" initiative.

- Schedule Honor Roll recognition activities.

- Establish interest internships.

- Form an academic booster club.

- Establish time for students to have lunch with the principal off campus.

- Schedule an interdisciplinary showcase of student talents.

Barriers: Developing, processing, and implementing PEPs

Sample Strategies: Developing, processing, and implementing PEPs

- Train teachers and administrators in developing and processing PEPs.

- Provide teachers with a sample list of documentation of work to be completed to substantiate the PEP process. The list may include, but is not limited to, projects and other student work, parent contacts and contracts, and evidence of tutoring sessions.

- Schedule work sessions in schools and at the district level on the development of PEPs by a team of educators who work with the students rather than individual development.

- Establish target dates to review and monitor PEPs. Document dates of review.

Other Issues That Schools Must Address

Barrier: Parent Involvement

1. home problems that interfere with learning
2. parent ownership of and involvement with their child's education
3. availability of information
4. formal and informal networks of communication

Barrier: Scheduling Problems

1. changing the "traditional" schedule
2. fragmentation of the day
3. services for limited English proficient students
4. time for scheduling courses failed

Barrier: Assessment versus Accountability

Barrier: Exceptional Children's Programming

1. testing requirements
2. pull-outs

Barrier: Curriculum Articulation

Suggestions for Implementing High School PEPs

1. PEPs should be developed for any incoming ninth grader who has failed one or both portions of the End-of-Grade (EOG) test. Since the eighth grade teacher knows the student best at this point in time, it is suggested that the eighth grade teacher fill in the "Areas for Improvement" section of the PEP form. Because the receiving teacher(s) will be responsible for carrying out the focused interventions, s/he should list the strategies to be implemented. The eighth grade teachers should develop a corresponding list of "students who need support/focused intervention" that is submitted to the high school along with the PEPs. Focused interventions are prescribed based on the individualized needs of students.

2. It would be helpful to submit (to the high school) a portfolio of the work of incoming ninth graders along with the PEP. The portfolio should also include the four-year career plan as well as the general and diagnostic information requested on the PEP.

3. Any high school student who does not pass a required End-of-Course (EOC) test should immediately have a PEP developed. EOCs serve as the benchmarks to determine a student's likelihood of passing the exit exam. This is especially critical for ninth graders who will be required to pass an exit exam. **NOTE: This requirement begins with students who are ninth graders during the 1999-2000 school year.** Current teachers would develop the "Areas for Improvement," and subsequent teachers would list and involve others as necessary to provide the focused interventions the student needs.

4. The high school should develop a list and description of interventions available to students and circulate this among the entire faculty so that anyone working on a PEP has knowledge of the services available. It would also be helpful to share this information with the feeder school(s). Each department may want to do this individually, and then combine all listings into one document.

5. Whenever possible, PEPs should be written collaboratively by the teachers, counselors, parents, and students. Since all parties are responsible for the focused interventions and the student's success, all parties should be involved in developing the PEP. One teacher/counselor/social worker, etc., should be designated as the lead contact for the student's PEP and focused interventions.

6. Counselors, media specialists, social workers, dropout prevention specialists, etc. who work with the student should also be involved in

developing the PEP and carrying out the focused interventions, as appropriate.

7. PEPs should be reviewed at the mid-point of each grading period.

8. Each student with a PEP (and in fact all high school students) should have an assigned advocate or mentor who will closely monitor the student's academic progress and ensure that the PEP is implemented. **All** faculty and staff in the school should be involved in this process. See the description of the East Chapel Hill Advocacy program as one example of how this can work.

Sample High School PEP Forms

High School Personalized Education Plan (PEP)

_____ **School**

I. Descriptive Information

Student: _____ Grade: _____ School Year: _____ Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security Number: _____ Teacher/Advocate/Counselor Assigned: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Student Interests: _____

Attendance Record: _____ Social Skills: _____ Behavior Trends: _____

Prior Retentions/Grades: _____ Special Classification(s): Exceptional Child: _____ ESL: _____ 504: _____

II. Student Reflection (Please use this section for the student to add his/her comments on strengths/areas for improvement, learning styles, etc.).

III. Diagnostic Information

Eighth Grade Scores			End-of-Course Scores											
Course	**Level**	**Scale Score**	**Course**	**Level**	**Scale Score**	**Course**	**Level**	**Scale Score**	**Course**	**Level**	**Scale Score**	**Course**	**Level**	**Scale Score**
Reading			English I			Algebra I			ELPS			Biology		
Mathematics			English II			Algebra II			U.S. History			Physical Science		
Writing			English III			Geometry						Chemistry		
Portfolio	Yes	No	English IV			NCCTRM						Earth/Env Sci		
												Physics		
VoCATS Scores														

Academic Strengths		Academic Areas for Improvement	
Eighth Grade	**Ninth Grade**	**Eighth Grade**	**Ninth Grade**
Tenth Grade	**Eleventh Grade**	**Tenth Grade**	**Eleventh Grade**

IV. **Intervention Plan**

Areas for Improvement	Strategies	Timeline	Resources Needed	Method of Assessment

PEPs should be completed in collaboration with parents, students, and counselors (as needed).

Part IV. Monitoring/Adjustments/Progress Checks

Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

Adjustments Made:

Signatures:

Student's Signature/Date

Parent's Signature/Date

Teacher's Signature/Date

High School Personalized Education Plan (PEP)

_____ **School**

I. Descriptive Information

Student: _____ Grade: _____ School Year: _____ Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security Number: _____ Special Classification(s): Exceptional Child: _____ ESL: ____ 504: ____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Student Interests: _____

Attendance Record: _____ Social Skills: _____

II. Diagnostic Information

Previous Retention(s)/Grade(s): _____

Previous Course(s) Failed: _____

Eighth Grade Test Results: Reading Level/Scale Score: _____ Math Level/Scale Score: _____ Writing Score: _____

Portfolio: Yes _____ No _____

Academic Strengths	Academic Areas for Improvement

Signatures

_____ Teacher/Date

_____ Teacher/Date

_____ Teacher/Date

_____ Support Person/Position/Date

_____ Support Person/Position/Date

_____ Support Person/Position/Date

III. Intervention Plan

Areas for Improvement	Strategies	Timeline	Resources Needed	Method of Assessment

PEPs should be completed in collaboration with the Student Services Management Team/Student Assistance Team.

IV. Monitoring/Adjustments/Progress Checks

Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

Adjustments Made:

Parent Contacts Made:

Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date

Signatures:

Student Signature/Date

Parent Signature/Date

High School Personalized Education Plan (PEP)

_____ School

Part I: Descriptive Information

Student: _____ Grade: _____ School Year: _____ Teacher: _____

Social Security Number: _____ Birthdate: _____ Interests: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____ Home Telephone: _____ Work Telephone: _____

Attendance Record: _____ Behavior Patterns: _____ Social Skills: _____

Check all appropriate: _____ Exceptional Child _____ ESL _____ Prior Retention(s)

Part II: Diagnostic Information

Check all appropriate statements, if applicable:

_____ Level I in Reading

_____ Level I in Mathematics

_____ Level II in Reading

_____ Level II in Mathematics

_____ Below 2.5 in Writing

End-of-Course Results

_____ English I _____ Algebra I _____ ELPS _____ Biology

_____ English II _____ Algebra II _____ US History _____ Physical Science

_____ English III _____ Geometry _____ Chemistry

_____ English IV _____ Physics

Academic Strengths

Academic Areas for Improvement

Part III: Intervention Plan

Areas for Improvement	Strategies	Timeline	Resources Needed	Method of Assessment

Part IV: Monitoring/Adjustments

Progress Checks: Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

Adjustments Made and Date(s):

Signatures

Student: _____ Date: _____

Parent: _____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Sample Action Steps for Reading and Writing

Areas for Improvement	Strategies
Reading Skills	• Identify students performing at Levels I and II early and place them in a remedial reading class as an elective and award one unit of credit. • Offer staff development and have teachers implement strategies for reading across the curriculum. • Provide reading instruction in all core subjects. • Develop learning centers in reading with grade level/subject area teachers planning together. Centers address competency in viewing, reading, listening, and writing. • Monitor and conference with students as they are working in centers. • Keep portfolios of student work. Include a progress sheet that can be shared with other teachers, parents, counselor, and student. • Use the Internet for acceleration strategies.
Writing Skills	Writing centers to address the following components: • Attention to grammar skills and composition structure • Review of literacy concepts • Time for writing labs • Cooperative learning activities • Peer editing • Mock writing test graded by the teacher • Exchange of writing papers for other teachers to grade • Peer grading • Teacher models "good" writing • Literacy charts of specific reading material • Writing in every core subject every day.

Sample Action Steps for Mathematics and Science

Areas for Improvement	Strategies
Application of Math Skills	• Use benchmark testing to identify students who need assistance early. • Offer "Success/Fundamentals of Math" classes to provide remediation and acceleration for students who have not reached proficiency levels. Offer credit for the course. Use active learning and manipulatives in these classes. • Consider using an instructional management system and computer labs to provide remediation and acceleration. • Establish learning centers that promote application of skills to "real life" situations. • Build portfolios of student work. • Allow students to use calculators. • Use student monitoring charts regularly.
Scientific Application Skills (all science classes)	• Establish learning centers in which students can be guided by prescription (individualized) learning activities. • Integrate science concepts in other curriculum areas. • Use varied instructional strategies such as cooperative learning, computer and science lab activities, technology, vocational concepts, manipulatives, and real-life application. • Emphasize reading and writing. • Use benchmark testing to determine mastery of concepts.

Program Spotlight

This section is intended to feature two programs that can provide teachers additional opportunities to work more closely with students to monitor PEPs and provide incoming ninth graders with special assistance to get on grade level prior to actually beginning ninth grade.

High School Advocacy Program
(East Chapel Hill High School)

All students benefit from a significant relationship with an adult; therefore, an Advocacy Program can exist where each staff member will meet with his/her student advocates individually and in small groups on a regular basis. Such a relationship fosters increased academic success and supports student needs throughout high school. Active student participation in the Advocacy Program promotes a sense of belonging to the wider school community. These goals will be realized annually for all student advocates when they provide opportunities for three things:

1. conducting regular self-assessment of academic progress during the year in all subjects, concentrating specifically on major projects and test performance;
2. engaging in the registration and career planning process jointly with the adult advocate and the counseling staff; and
3. planning to complete the service learning requirements, with monitoring assistance by the adult advocate.

Advocacy is scheduled twice a month and for special events. Five minutes are taken from each class period and lunch so that the Advocacy meeting is 30 minutes in length.

Grade levels in each Advocacy Group are mixed (approximately three each of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors). The administration feels that having a variety of students with individual experiences shares the benefits with everyone involved. One of the early activities at the beginning of school has upperclassmen offering their "best advice" to new students and ninth graders, and also gives ninth graders a chance to ask questions of students who have already been through the freshman experience. Advocates are assigned for the entire time a student is enrolled in the school. If there is a problem between student and Advocate, an appeal to an administrator can be made to change Advocates. A conference must be held, and all parties must be in agreement that this is the wisest course of action. Students are

encouraged to stay with their Advocate to develop a relationship with an adult in the building who does not necessarily have them in a class.
For every scheduled Advocacy meeting, there is a "game plan" written and provided for the teachers. The "plan" tries to address student concerns, information distribution, and other issues. Report cards and progress reports are also distributed through the Advocacy teacher. Some advocacy groups choose to work on a special project that benefits the community while also building school spirit and earning service learning hours.

Open lines of communication are encouraged between the Advocate and the home for informational purposes as well as for sharing concerns regarding academic performance.

Early Entrance to High School

For Incoming Ninth Graders Who Have Not Yet Passed the Reading and/or Mathematics EOG
and
Those Who Received A Waiver of the Student Accountability Standards

Early Entrance to High School

- Five to six weeks in the summer prior to the high school beginning date
- Emphasis on study skills, and reading, writing, and mathematics skills
- Learning activities are active, hands-on, involve the use of calculators, and problem-solving skills
- All teachers teach reading skills through each content area (science, social studies, etc.)
- Selected teachers should be paid more and receive 12 months of employment
- Select the best teachers available. Teacher selection is key.
- Some teachers also teach Ninth Grade Rotation

Ninth Grade Rotation

- Held during the first and/or second semesters, depending on the needs of students
- Nontraditional student schedule (See below for an example.)

120 mins	120 mins	90 mins	30 mins
Math	English Reading	Elective	• Intervention • Advisory • Study Skills • Careers

- Schedule similar to that of the middle school
- Exceptional children's teacher included on the team
- Criteria established for determining exit from Ninth Grade Rotation at the end of the first semester
- Exit criteria may include competency test scores, portfolio, etc.
- Teacher selection is key

More ...

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions and Answers About the Student Accountability Standards

1. **Is there a waiver review process for writing at gateway 2 and 3?**
No. The principal and teacher(s) shall use locally developed and scored writing samples during grades 5 and 8 to determine if students have made adequate progress in order to be promoted to the next grade. The writing tests are screens to determine whether students need focused intervention. The Division of Instructional Services is currently developing a brochure to answer questions dealing with the writing process.

2. **Must a child be retained if he/she does not score at or above 2.5 on the writing test at grades 4 and 7?**
No. The writing test is a screen to identify students who need writing intervention. Teachers should continually assess writing progress throughout an entire school year. The writing tests serve as an indicator as to what type and amount of extra help a student needs. Writing is one indicator a teacher uses to determine promotion from the 5th grade to the 6th grade and from the 8th grade to the 9th grade.

3. **When must focused intervention for writing take place?**
SBE policy requires that focused intervention must occur at the 5th and 8th grades. However, that doesn't mean that intervention cannot take place immediately after the test administration and during summer school. The 5th and 8th grade teachers must also give extra assistance and continued writing instruction. The amount and type depends on the students' needs.

14. **Must you have a Personalized Education Plan (PEP) for a student who does not meet the 2.5 proficiency for writing in the fourth or seventh grade?**
It is not mandated. For the State Board of Education's purposes, focused intervention must take place at the fifth and eighth grade. Teachers should continue ongoing assessment of writing.

14. **What should be the components of a PEP?**
A PEP should consist of (1) diagnostic evaluation of student's strengths and weaknesses, (2) intervention strategies that may include extra assistance beyond the classroom, acceleration of learning, and extra help, and (3) monitoring strategies should

include a variety of assessments including writing samples reviewed on a regular basis.

14. **According to State Board of Education Policy, are PEPs mandated at the high school level?**
PEPs are required for only those students not meeting proficiency on the exit exam. We encourage PEPs for those students who do not score at level III or IV on end-of-course tests. The competency test may also be used as an indicator for students that need additional help.

14. **Where is the PEP stored?**
The PEP should be in a place that is easily accessible to the teacher(s) who are instructing the student. It should be a roadmap to guide student instruction.

14. **For exceptional children, is the PEP different from the IEP?**
They are two different documents intended to serve different purposes. However, they could be combined if everyone involved including the parent understands they are combined. If an IEP is to serve as a PEP also, the IEP must include the three components of the PEP: diagnosis, intervention, and monitoring and must include components of the IEP and address the needs because of the disability. Combining an IEP and PEP is a local decision. Documentation must be a part of the IEP and PEP development and parents and school personnel should understand that they are combined.

14. Should borderline Level III's have a PEP?
The State Board does not mandate PEPs for students at the borderline of Level III. Having a PEP for these students is a local decision.

10. **Who completes the PEP (teachers, counselors, etc.)?**
It is a local decision. We recommend that you have a team of teachers and instructional support personnel involved. The team members should know the student's strengths and needs. If the PEP is for a student with disabilities, the IEP team must be involved.

11. **Could we have a session on IEP and PEP plans and how these need to be addressed?**
We encourage LEA central office staff and curriculum leaders at schools to deliver professional development about PEPs and IEPs to teachers. Sessions about PEPs and IEPs will be included in conferences and workshops sponsored by DPI. PEP resource

materials are now available; others will be prepared before the end of this school year.

12. **Could our teachers have model training for best practices demonstrated on developing PEP's, etc.?**
Best practices will be incorporated into regular scheduled conferences delivered by DPI. Videos about developing PEPs have been sent to each LEA. A detailed document about PEPs will be distributed this spring.

13. **If a PEP is written including classroom modifications for a student, will the modification be permitted for EOC test administration?**
The accommodations for students on EOC tests are controlled by the student's IEP team and are only allowable for students with disabilities. The IEP team should be aware of what accommodations are permissible for state tests.

14. **What is the definition of at-risk?**
Any student scoring at level I or II on end-of-grade or end-of-course tests. It also includes students who show indicators of potential failure.

15. **Should we prepare them for the graduating class of 2003 for the competency test or the exit exam?**
Under current SBE policy, the class of 2003 must pass both the competency test and exit exam.

16. **If a student is retested with EOGs under the student accountability standards policy, which test score counts toward the ABCs?**
The initial administration of the test is the one used for the ABCs accountability model.

17. **If students do not pass the competency test prior to the end of a semester, how are the students rescheduled, or will they be rescheduled (10/20 rule)?**
Students enrolled in a special course for preparation for the competency test are not affected by the 10/20 rule since the rule only applies to courses for which there are EOC tests.

18. **When do we give retests and remediation with a block schedule?**
Retesting of students not meeting Level III or IV on high school end-of-course tests is <u>not</u> a state requirement. For exit exam remediation, LEAs should determine the extent of student

deficiencies and base remediation on those deficiencies. End-of-course test scores should be one indication to determine whether students need focused intervention.

19. **How are other systems using their remediation money?**
Comprehensive information is not available at this time at the state level. At-risk money can be used for after-school, summer school, before-school, tutoring, etc.

20. **How do you remediate the course already completed?**
When to remediate is a local decision. Assessment of student learning should be ongoing in every class.

21. **What is the timeline for staff training and implementation?**
It is a local decision to set timelines for staff training and implementation within the implementation timeline stipulated in the student accountability standards.

22. **Have the "powers that be" addressed the need for more psychologists in testing?**
The State Board of Education is aware of schools needing more counselors.

23. **Do most systems have one coordinator that just oversees the whole process of accountability/review teams?**
All systems must designate a testing/accountability coordinator. However, we do not collect data about how schools are setting up accountability/review teams.

24. **Wouldn't it be beneficial to have a coordinator in the county so that all the questions, concerns, form development, etc. could be overseen by one person?**
Having a coordinator for these specific purposes is a local decision. LEAs must determine how to use staff in the most effective and efficient ways.

25. **Is the new SIMS-NCWISE going to be able to extract testing data that we could download into a student profile for the PEP?**
NCWISE will have the capability of exporting test data for PEP use.

26. **What do we do to determine levels of out-of-state children?**
It is a principal's decision to grade and classify students. This decision should be based on transcripts and other records.

27. **When, during the student waiver process, may a parent request a review?**
A parent may request a review after the second OR third administration of an end-of-grade test, but not both.

28. **Are we required to send LEP students before the Review Committee to receive the two additional years of exemptions from the Student Accountability Standards?**
There is no automatic exemption for LEP students from the Student Accountability Standards. Students who are exempt from statewide testing must have a portfolio of documentation submitted to a local committee to determine whether students have made sufficient academic progress to be promoted. Students who are no longer eligible for the testing exemption and who score below Level III may be eligible for a waiver from this requirement for promotion for two additional years due to language proficiency. Once again, a portfolio of documentation must be submitted to a local committee. It is suggested that the committee be outside the school and include an ESL teacher. However, committee make up is not specified. Whether or not it is the same committee as the one hearing appeals, is a local decision. The key to the LEP policy is that the waiver from the Student Accountability Standards is not automatic; it must be based on documentation in the instructional portfolio, and it should be made by a committee rather than a single individual.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Closing the Achievement Gap

Excerpted and adapted from Michael Ward's comments at the Closing the Achievement Gap Conference April 27, 2000.

Closing the gap is so important; but there is a potential risk -- we run the risk of sending an unintended message that to be a minority student is to be at risk. Of course, this is absurd. Among the most capable students in our state are students who are African American, Native American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian American, and so on. Some of the most successful students in our state are disadvantaged. And some of the students at greatest risk are white, middle class, and wealthy. No, there is not an automatic link between race, certain disabilities, socio-economic status, and success in school -- but the relationship exists far too often, and it is one of the most persistent dilemmas of schools.

There are three compelling motivators that should prompt us to assure progress for all students. First, there's the social reality. In addition to other support, public schools have traditionally benefited from strong support in the African American, Native American, and Hispanic communities. We are, however, at risk of losing some of our most ardent supporters. The support we have cannot be sustained if public schools don't assure that schools serve all children well. Likewise, the support of parents and community members who question whether children who are successful can be challenged to even greater accomplishments is at risk if the system doesn't work for all children, if all are not making progress in school.

The financial realities of our day present a second important reason to address the gaps in student performance. Each North Carolina graduate must be ready to take his/her place in an increasingly complex workplace. Recent newspaper headlines cited the dramatic growth in the recruitment of foreign technicians and professionals by North Carolina business and industry. To paraphrase a famous quote, the engine of sustained economic growth is not the assembly line, not the phone line, not the modem line, not even the bottom line; it's the commencement line. We simply cannot afford the numbers of youngsters, too many of them minority, too many of them poor, who are unable to meet the academic and technical demands of our schools, much less the demands of the contemporary and future workplace. Likewise, we cannot afford to fail in the quest to prompt even greater success among those who are already achieving at relatively high levels.

The third reason, and one of the most compelling, motivations is a *moral imperative*. We are thirty years into the enterprise we call integration.

Integration has been and continues to be a worthy social reform. Diversity isn't just a desirable element of the educational environment, it's an essential part of the education itself. The gaps in performance and gaps in opportunity are still very stark. It isn't that progress hasn't been achieved, but we will not have the luxury of another thirty years. And so we must make a difference simply because it is morally right, and it is our duty.

These motivators, the political, the economic, and the moral imperatives, are not lost upon people of strong will. It is true that we are in many instances confronted by lack of clarity, time, resources, and school-by-school know-how regarding the strategies to accomplish the important task of assuring progress for all. There are ways to address the barriers, if we have the will.

None of us alone is called upon to find solutions to the barriers. Rather, we can and must combine the resources of the schools, parents, communities, and businesses to close the achievement gap. The blueprint that follows is designed to offer guidance in leveraging and combining resources for the benefit of all children.

Improving Minority and At-Risk Student Achievement: School System/School Blueprint

Introduction

This Blueprint provides a series of phases that can be used by individuals or groups to develop a plan of action for improving the performance of minority and at-risk students. The conventional wisdom is that the most successful efforts for improving student performance will involve multiple organizations, interests, and perspectives. Such involvement will help ensure ownership of the solutions and outcomes and provide access to available resources. It is important to be sensitive to the needs of all involved groups. Blueprint activities should not give the impression that one group or another is somehow to blame, or that the problems belong only to one group. **The expectation is that the performance of all students will improve in meaningful ways as a result of these efforts.**

The indicator(s) of the Blueprint in each community may vary according to local needs and interests. It is most important that communities take responsibility and initiate steps to establish a plan of action and strategies for improving student performance. This process will integrate a wide variety of information and data about students, existing programs and services, and key community resource persons. The Blueprint is predicated upon the following principles:

Principles for High Achieving Schools

- Involve a wide range of constituencies as equal decision-making partners
- Make data-driven and/or research-based decisions
- Use a systemic approach to plan, implement, monitor, and modify programs
- Develop a collaborative mission, belief system, and vision
- Allocate resources needed to cause change such as people, money, materials, time, space
- Schedule adequate time for team members to meet and successfully complete tasks
- Provide an opportunity for all constituencies to have input in decisions
- Monitor progress towards an organization's mission and goal accomplishment

- Encourage, recognize and verify participant groups and individuals
- Provide a free flow of information to all stakeholders in the school/community
- Empower administrators to provide quality leadership for collaborative reform
- Develop skillful leadership teams to guide the improvement process

Definitions

1. Minority: A racial, religious, political, national, or other group (such as disabled persons) regarded as different from the larger group of which it is a part.

2. At-Risk Students: A term liberally used to describe students who are "at-risk" of academic failure. Schools may need to reform curricular and instructional policies and practices to meet the needs of these students and support their emotional growth and high achievement. Many factors place these students at risk -- including attitudes and behaviors of adults.

3. At-Risk Institutions: Organizations/institutions/bodies of people not responding effectively to the needs of at-risk students.

4. Minority Achievement Gap: The difference between the percentage of white students performing at grade level on North Carolina's End-of Grade/End-of-Course Tests and the percentage of minority students performing at grade level on the same tests.

5. Closing the Gap: The process of implementing strategies and systems of intervention to accelerate the percentage of minority students who are performing at grade level on North Carolina's End of Grade/End of Course Tests so that the percentage of all groups of students performing at grade level are similar. Such a process closes the gap upwardly such that no group's performance is 1) held stagnant or 2) allowed to decline in an effort to achieve the goal of closing the gap.

Blueprint for High Achieving Schools

Phase 1: The Initiation: Build Core Support

- Improving student performance is a significant challenge and requires preparation and the involvement of all stakeholders in the community. The primary goal is to develop a strong and influential core of concerned individuals who share a vision of what needs to be done and who are willing to help do it.

- Conduct an honest and non-judgmental assessment of student performance. Examine a variety of data that gives information on subgroups of the population by race, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

- Identify resource individuals and organizations in the community.

- Contact members of the key constituencies to enlist their support and determine the form their support will assume.

- Hold a first meeting with the core support group and discuss roles and responsibilities.

Phase 2: Develop Ideas and Specific Strategies

- Decide who will be participants and collaborators in the improvement process.

- Think! Talk! Listen! Ask questions. Discuss the obstacles or barriers faced by the community that may impede success. Be candid.

- Decide who has important information and should be contacted.

- Define specific questions that are related to improving student performance and how to solve them – questions such as the why, when, how, and the what has already been done.

Phase 3: Build Community Interest and Support for Improving Student Performance

- Build community interest through contact and share ideas with organizations and influential individuals.

- Develop contacts with the media.

Phase 4: Reach Consensus on a Plan of Action

- Be inclusive.
- Reach an agreement on the problems or contributing factors for low student performance that should be addressed first. Avoid judgments and preconceived notions. Use data to support the identification of problems.
- Discuss and agree on effective, research-based actions that will help eliminate the problems or contributing factors.

Phase 5: Develop the Blueprint for High Achieving Schools

- The Blueprint should include a mission statement, goals statement, description of essential tasks, persons responsible, resources required, timeline, and evaluation plan.
- Consider implementing the following tasks:

  1. Review school system and school policies, procedures, practices, curriculum guides, lesson plans, instructional materials, etc. to be sure they are free of bias or that they do not negatively affect any racial, ethnic, gender, religious, cultural, or disabled groups. For example, this review may reveal policies that essentially discourage, although unintentionally, minority and at-risk students from enrolling in more academically challenging courses such as higher-level mathematics and sciences.
  2. Analyze all student outcome data for your school district and school: test scores for the past three years in every subject; other factors such as student attendance and dropout data; disciplinary statistics, number of hours students watch television, play video games, spend time doing homework and work; number of students suspended/expelled, in academically gifted and exceptional children's' programs, performing at Achievement Levels I, II, III, and IV and the number moving to higher achievement levels, taking the Scholastic Achievement Test and their results, passing the North Carolina Competency Tests in Reading and Mathematics, enrolled in alternative programs, and the ratio of students per teacher.

- Disaggregate the above data by gender, ethnicity, and other factors.
- Meet with teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators, and parents to candidly discuss the data and other information.

- Keep your school system leadership informed of your efforts.

Phase 6: Inform and Educate the Larger Community About Your Plan

- Establish a beginning date.
- Use local media and develop a plan for communicating with the public.
- Share expectations and describe how and when progress will be monitored and reported to the community.

Phase 7: Implement the Blueprint for High Achieving Schools

- Keep interest ALIVE!
- Keep DOING!

Phase 8: Evaluate and Improve Your Blueprint for High Achieving Schools

- Identify program objectives you plan to evaluate.
- Decide what data are needed and how you will collect information on the amount of progress made.
- Collect the information.
- Summarize and publicize the results for educators, parents, local boards of education, potential funders, media, community reports, etc.

Blueprint developed by DPI staff. Incorporated ideas from "*Improving Opportunities for Underachieving Minority Students: A Planning Guide for Community Action*" by Bain, J.G. and Herman, J.L., (1989). Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation, Los Angeles, CA.

Note: For more in-depth information, contact the conference website at http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/closingthegap/.

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